



# DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

## INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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### SHRIMP PACKING INDUSTRY IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC AND GULF STATES

Odds are nine to one in your favor that whatever canned shrimp you buy has been packed under strict Federal supervision, according to the Fish and Wildlife Service, United States Department of the Interior.

"Following procedure that is unique in the domestic fish processing field, the shrimp canning industry of the South Atlantic and Gulf States has packed most of its products under Federal supervision since 1935," says Andre W. Anderson, Fishery Marketing Specialist of the Service, in the current issue of Fishery Market News.

"Whether or not the operation is a success," says Anderson, "may be answered by stating that although the supervision is permissive rather than mandatory over 90 percent of the million-case annual pack is prepared in Federally inspected plants and carries the phrase 'Production Supervised by the U. S. Food and Drug Administration.'"

Growing since 1935 has been the attitude of packers in this industry that "in handling a highly perishable sea food, the most effective method of insuring a satisfactory product suitable for human consumption is the application of a thorough-going governmental inspection and supervision at the source of production."

Canned shrimp demanded extensive attention before 1935, according to

Anderson, when hundreds of samples were seized and condemned because of spoilage. As a result of these seizures, Congress adopted an amendment to the Food and Drugs Act commonly known as the "Seafood Amendment."

Originally the packer paid the full cost of the inspection, but on August 27, 1935, the amendment was changed, permitting Congress to appropriate funds to provide for part of the inspection costs. However, no appropriation was authorized until the 1936-37 season when \$40,000 was made available. The same amount has been appropriated each year since.

"Three shrimp canneries in Biloxi, Miss., were the first to request the inspection service," writes Anderson, "receiving it in September 1934. In all, 22 plants in Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas were supervised during the 1934-35 season, their combined packs representing 300,000 standard cases of the season's total of approximately 1,101,000 cases. The following year 39 plants were under inspection, packing 90 percent of the shrimp canned during the season starting July 1, 1935, and ending June 30, 1936. This percentage has been maintained or increased during each succeeding year.

"It has been stated by the Food and Drug Administration that 'While the seafood amendment does not render inoperative the provisions of the law for criminal prosecution and seizure action on interstate shipments of violative goods, a compliance with the regulations promulgated under the amendment insures the integrity of the products and thus renders the remedial provisions of the act unnecessary. Not only is this advantageous to the packer but the consumer is more effectively guaranteed a sanitary, safe, and wholesome product than can possibly be assured through the enforcement of the other provisions of the act.'

"The stringent regulations of the Seafood Inspection Service, as the administering unit is known, made necessary numerous and widespread alterations in

both the type of equipment and the method of procedure in most of the plants requesting supervision of their production. Plants had to be screened against insects and protected from vermin. Equipment for washing shrimp and inspection belts for culling shrimp were required. Wood tables, tanks, and similar equipment unable to meet sanitary requirements had to be replaced by metal. Delays in packing were forbidden and retorts had to be equipped with regulating and recording devices to insure adequate processing."

The revised regulations for the inspection of canned shrimp during the 1939-40 season as promulgated by the Secretary of Agriculture may be found in the Federal Register for June 14, 1939, Volume 4, Number 114. They took effect the following July 1. At this time it is understood there will be no change in the regulations for the 1940-41 season.

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